A WORD

To the LII LONDON MINISTERS.

SHEVVING

That the moſt zealous Profeſſors of Religion in all Ages have been the greateſt Perſecutors of Chriſt and his moſt Spirituall Members, illuſtrated and proved.

By *Nicolas Cowling*.

IOH. 16. V. 2.

They ſhall put you out of the Synagogues, yea the time commeth, that whoſoever killeth you will think that he doth God ſervice.

IOH. 7. V. 48.

Have any of the Rulers, or of the Phariſes beleeved on him?

LONDON,
Printed in the Yeare, 1648.

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A Word to the 52. London *MINISTERS.*

HAving seen of late a little Book entituled *a Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ*: and finding my selfe by name, listed for an Heretick, in that I have formerly Asserted that *a Beleever is perfect in this life, or never*, which I yet hold for a truth, seeing that as the tree falleth so it shall lie, and it hath been the Doctrin of reverend *Hieram, Bolton, Dod*, and others; *As the day of death leaveth thee, the day of judgment shall find thee*: but to be convicted for an Heretick by no other Argument but that female one, it is so because it is so, I cannot so be satisfied; therefore my humble desire unto you is, that some one amongst you will be pleased to set forth from the Let-

ter of the Holy-Scriptures (without any of your fallible interpretations. The time when, the place where, and the means by which, a man that before hee dyes is not perfectly made one with the Father and the Sonne by the Spirit, but shall be made so after death : It shall be sufficient unto me to retract my opinion although I have nothing asserted but is Scripture phrase in the letter thereof, if you please to consider the same, seeing the Apostle affirmeth on the behalf of his brethren the Iewes. *I bear* [b] *them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* Giveme leave to set before you that glasse that hath plainly shewn me my former mistakes, when I was zealus in my conformitie unto that administration of the Prelacy, & since of that covenanted form of Independency, those that did know mee in either, can bear me witnesse of the truth of my zeal unto my principles : but having a clear manifestation of the true ground and cause from whence ariseth all the revylings bitings and devourings that is amongst brethren, to be no other but that old root of bitternesse which separated

[a] Rom. 10. 2.

Adam

Adam from his Maker, namely Ambition and Covetouſnes; his Ambition led him no higher than God, bnt to be equal with him in knowledge, his Coveruoſneſſe led him out to that which was none of his, either by gift or purchaſe: the ſame principle of Ambition and Covetuoſnes remaineth, but in a different manner, no more aſcending up ſo high as God, for that way our necks were broken; but now the deſigne is we will fetch God down as low as our ſelves, or we will have none of him, nay wee will knock him out of the country, if he dare to manifeſt himſelfe in any other way then wee preſcribe him. As wee may plainly ſee in *Cain*, when hee had formed a ſacrifice in which he thought GOD was bound to meet him, and the way of *Abel* was accepted, and his rejected; how was his countenance caſt down, and wrath encreaſed againſt his brother, ſo that nothing could ſatisfie his diſcontent ſoule, but the death of his brother, that ſo hee might no more be troubled with ſuch a manifeſtation of God as appeared in him, which was contrary unto his former [b] *Korah* because

[b] Gen. 3. 5. 6.

cauſe all the people were holy, would not allow that manifeſtation of God unto *Moſes*, to be any whit ſuperlative unto him, or any of the people, and therefore ſtubbornly wee will not come up. [a] more particularly come and ſee the reaſon why the Prophets of the Lord could periſh no where but at *Ieruſalem*, where the temple of God was, the high Prieſt that was anointed with holy oile, the Tabernacle, the Mercy ſeat, the Altar of Incenſe, the daily ſacrifice, and the Holy of Holies, where were the Oracles, and yet in this place muſt the Prophets fall.

[a] Numb. 16. 12.

Vndoubtedly for no other cauſe but that the Lord was pleaſed to manifeſt himſelfe in them, unto the people in a more ſpirituall and ſalubious manner then he did appear in the Scribes who were their expoſiters of the law of *Moſes*, ſeeing therein no farther than the bare letter (the Prophets being no weekly Lecturers, nor Maſters of any Synagogues) but ſpake only when ſent, and as the Spirit gave them utterance. It may ſeem ſtrang that *Iſaiah* a Prophet of ſo long ſtanding as to propheſie unto foure

Kings

Kings, ſhould in his old age be by the learned Rabbies awarded no better death, than to bee ſawed in peices. It muſt needs be for ſome grievous blaſphemy; two of which yee may find in his propheſie [a] according to their expoſitions, the firſt was that the Gentiles ſhould be a glorious Church, the ſecond was that which raigneth ſo much amongſt us now, namely hee preached down [b] Ordinances, *Hee that killeth an Oxe as if he ſlew a man, he that ſacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dogges neck; he that offereth an oblation as if hee offered ſwines blood, he that burneth inceuſe as if he bleſſed an Idoll*, this was blaſpheming enough to deſerve the Sawe, and that the firſt was blaſphemous enough to deſerve death, may appeare by that of St. Paul *Act.* 22. 21. *And he ſaid unto me depart, for I will ſend thee far hence, unto the gentiles*, v. 22. *And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lift up their voices and ſaid away with ſuch a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he ſhould live*: ſo that to all ſuch now as are yet in the miniſtration of *Moſes*, & no farther, can and will kill any that live higher above

[a] Iſa. 42. 1. 6. 7.

[b] Iſa. 66. 3.

bove Ordinances, in the Spirit, if they can but get *Pilate* to give judgment, for the like cauſes did all the reſt of the Prophets ſuffer, the being more ſpirituall, God bearing witneſſe in them, did outſhine thoſe that lived in the bare letter of Ordinances, and therefore could not bear ſuch doctrines that did croſſe their monthes. Firſt, their Sacrifices and their ſtanding before the Lord to enquire after his wil, their hypocritical humiliations and bowing downe the head like a bulruſh. Theſe things with many other ſpoken of by the Prophets, and ſharply inveighed againſt; many more (which I could mention, but for brevity I omit) were the only cauſes why thoſe godly men according to the letter did deale ſo inhumanely barbarous with thoſe deare ſervants the Prophets of the Lord, but you will ſay if the whole *Sanedrim* of the Iewes did conſent, how came their Propheſies to be enrolled in the cannon of holy writ? It is probable that in all ages there were ſome few that had their negative voice, and did ſurvive the execution of thoſe horrid councells and when good Magiſtrates reigned

reigned, then were thoſe records reveiwed, & then was enquiry made for their Sepulchers to have them adorned; and had we lived in the dayes of our fathers wee would not have killed the Prophets of the Lord as they did, and ſo the generations ſucceſſively filled up the meaſure of their fathers iniquity; more plainely, this is to bee ſeen in the dayes of the Lord Ieſus Chriſt, if wee conſider well how he being ſo popular, when hee came to ſave his life by the vote of the people, loſt it ſo ſhamefully that a Murtherer was preferred before him, and the more ſtrang it is that their affections but two dayes before were ſo fixt on him, that they durſt enter into the ſtrong garriſon of Ieruſalem, being then under the command of the Romans, *Pilate* being Governour; and there openly to proclaim a new King of the houſe of *David*, crying *Hoſanna*, Alarum ſufficient to have brought them to a Councell of Warre, and there they might have thrown dice for their lives; and yet theſe men upon ſerious conſideration changed their minds, and within three dayes voted him to death. But

you

you will say this was a giddy multitude easie to bee drawn by cunning, crafty, wicked men; the Iewish nation were never accompted fooles in worldly wisdome, neither were these men prophane, but devout in expecting their *Messias*, and upon that accompt they followed him from sea to sea to hear his Doctrine, and see his Miracles, and when spies were sent to carp at him, none so ready as they to justifie him, as, when the Christ commeth will he doe greater things than this man hath done. And lo on an instant, crucifie him, away with him, he is not worthy to live. Lets enquire into the cause hereof, and surely you shall find it not to proceed from lightnesse, malice against God, or from prophanesse, but rather from their zeal unto God, and the preservation of his holy Ordinances, as appeareth thus. Vpon this uproare *Caiphas* calleth an assembly (not of drunkards, swearers, and prophane persons) [a] but of the most reverend Priests, Scribes, Pharisees, and devout men, that walked constantly in the performance of all Religious duties towards

Ioh. 11. 45. 50.

wards God, according to the fashion of the Church in those dayes; and some of them had walked in all good Conscience towards God, as concerning the Law, unblameable unto that day.

Now saith he, Ye know nothing at all, neither do ye consider that our nation is like to perish, if this Iesus remain alive, you are so consciencious of shedding bloud least he should be a Prophet, and so you thinke you shall thereby fill up the measure of our Fathers iniquitie; but we must sometimes act Providentially, as well as Piously and Iustly; and therefore whether is it better that one man should dye, or a whole Nation perish? this is now put to the vote, and carryed in the affirmative, onely two are in the negative *Ioseph* of *Arimathea* and *Nicodemus*, but heer is the quære, the people so doate on him, that they will stone us, we must therefore get him by night, and when we have seiz'd him we shall easily draw off the people from him: for in deed and truth he is not of God, but doth all his works by Belzebub, and thus the people shall clearly see when wee have gotten him: Christ is

now

now intheir hands by the treaſon of his owne ſervant, and that in the night when the multitude was aſleep, and now the people are called in having ſecured his perſon from their reach; and now the high Prieſt begins to act his part, beginning thus or the like, brethren you are the Children of *Abraham*, of the noble ſtock of *Iſrael*; to whom are committed the Oracles of God, and you are all of you devout and zealous towards God, as we are this day, according to the Law of *Moſes*, and the traditions of the Fathers, for ye are ſure that God ſpake with *Moſes*; but I ſhall make it appear unto, that all that this man hath done is by the power of Beelzebub, for you may be aſſured that whoſoever keepeth not the commandements which *Moſes* gave us, is not of God, and when this doth appeare, you will have other thoughts of him, call in the witneſſes, doth this man, your great Prophet, keep the Sabboth day? nothing leſſe, he works himſelfe, and juſtifies others, alſo he made clay for a plaiſter, he allowed his Diſciples to gather corn, he commanded the impotent man to carry his

his Bed, he cured the withered hand, and many more ſuch pranks he doth on the Sabboth day: well, what thinke ye, is he a friend to our nation? or doth he not complot with the Romans to deſtroy us? It is very probable; for wee deſired him to reſolve us *whether it was lawfull to give Gods peny to* Cæſar *or no*, he bids us *Give unto* Cæſar *the things that were* Cæſars, *and unto God, the things that are Gods*; ſee he cares not how he burtheneth the nation. What thinke ye of him concerning the Ordinances and the Temple, doth he maintain them? here is witneſs that he did intend to deſtroy the Temple: a very good teſtimony; what ſayeſt thou to all that is witneſſed againſt thee, anſwereſt thou nothing for thy ſelfe? we intend to doe nothing againſt thee but juſtice; nay, thou ſhalt have mercy from us, ſo farre as it may not empeach the glory of God for which our zeale is purely fervent. Chriſt anſwers nothing, as if he were ſure the major vote of the people would carry it for him,

He is now commanded to withdraw, and now the Preiſts turne to the people what

what think yee, is he worthy to live? ſome of the wiſer and more conſcientious amongſt them demur'd upon it, the witneſſes not agreeing fully in every punctilio to the Articles exhibited againſt him: now the Prieſt replyes I ſee a mighty beſottedneſſe upon your ſpirits; the breach of the Sabbath, the deſtruction of the Temple, the laying aſide of Ordinances is nothing with you, I think you will tollerate Blaſphemy; likewiſe (nay) there is no blaſphemy proved againſt him, but what if you hear him blaſpheme to your faces? call him in againe: Come ſir you have hard thoughts of us, as if we intended to take away thy life right or wrong, which appeares to us by thy ſilent carriage towards us; but I would have thee know wee are holy conſciencious men, and do earneſtly wait for the *Meſiah*, and if wee were ſure thou wert him, we would worſhip thee, this ſet the people right to judge of him: now followes the oath *ex officio*. I adjure thee by the living God to tell us whether thou be the Chriſt the ſon of the living God. *Thou haſt ſaid; nevertheles*

I say unto you, hereafter shall yee see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and comming in the clouds of Heaven. Now yee have heard his blasphemy. *Mat.* 26. v. 66, to 68. See then how priest and people (though devout) were transported into a frantick zeale, for preserving God from being blasphemed, not being able to bear the appearancy of God in the flesh, and so became the betrayers and murtherers of the Lord of life, and so those people that but even now feared no danger for Christ, being no higher principled than in the carnall commandement of godlinesse given by *Moses*, which is but the utter Court of the Temple, were easily drawn aside (by the specious pretence of that seeming godlinesse which the Scribes and Pharisees lived in, and thereby deceived themselves as well as the people) and so thought it a more Pious equitable work to vote, that a murtherer (who was penitent) should live, than to preserve a Blasphemer, that continues in his sinne, and so disturbes the peace of their carnall Church. Vpon the same accompt did our Popish Bishops

ſhops deſtroy the Lollards, and burne the Martyrs, not becauſe they were godly people, but becauſe they were adjudged Hereticks, yet wee condemne them as great perſecutors of the Saints: and yet we muſt make up the meaſure of our Fathers iniquity? if *Penry Barraw* and *Grenwel* will be ſo bold as to affirme Biſhops to be Antichriſtian, he muſt hang for it, in the dayes of famous *Elizabeth*; and if *Hacket* will affirm that Chriſt is in him the hope of glory, he muſt truſs likewiſe: I hope you will not conclude our Clergy to be maliciouſly wicked, but what they did was in order to the peace of the Church, and the glory of God, as it did then appeare unto them. Chriſt told *Peter* that fleſh and bloud revealed not that confeſſion; as if he ſhould have ſaid, If thou hadſt all the Divinities of the Preiſts, Scribes, Phariſees, and learned Grecians, nay, if thou hadſt been Doctor of the Chair in Oxford and Cambridge, all theſe, nor any of theſe can reveal me, but my Father which is in Heaven; and therefore the time ſhall come, and ſtill is that the Rabbies of the Churches ſhall thinke

they

they doe God good ſervice when they kill my beloved ones.

Now my deare hearts, and fellow members in that glorious head the Lord Chriſt Ieſus, bee not bitter in your ſpirits, and judge nothing before the time; experience is the beſt teacher, and therefore to you that are not privy to your ſelves of any ſecret ſelviſhneſſe, but are ſimply and purely zealous for God, as was *Saul*, and will not knowingly ſmite or offend the leaſt of Chriſts members, I ſay let me be bold in love to impart unto you my former experience in the myſterie of Chriſt. I thought a long while a faith in Ieſus, that dyed at Ieruſalem, was the top gallant of a Chriſtian, but ſince it doth cleerly appear, that all the faith the diſciples had in Chriſt their Maſter, which was a faith only without, and none of the miſtery of Chriſt within them. I ſay that faith in the perſon of the Lord Ieſus dyed with him, ſo that when he was dead there was not one that did expect ever to ſee him againe; for *Mary* went not to ſee whether he was riſen, but to anoint his dead body; yea the diſciples

who had ground enough for belief, could be so charitable as to judge *Mary* to bee no better than a lyer, in reporting fained things, affirming that he was risen, and we trusted it had been him that should have delivered Israel, said the two disciples, but he is dead; so that its clear all the faith they had in Iesus dyed with Iesus : now the Apostle tels you *Phil.* 3. 9. *That we may be found in him: not having mine own righteousnesse which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ (not in Christ) the righteousnesse which of God by faith.* And likewise it is not sufficient that wee beleeve there was such a one dyed at Ierusalem, and God was fully pleased in him. But the same Apostle tels you, *Col.* 1. 24. *That as the head passed through sufferings, so there is a remainder of afflictions of Christ in our flesh, for the bodyes sake.* And ver. 27. *And that it sufficeth not that there is a Christ without us. But Christ in you the hope of glory.* And therefore it is Christ in the mistery that will save; a wooden leg that is tyed on may doe some service, but the leg that is naturally fixt is usefull for all occasions, seeing by

all

all thoſe former examples, that the Prophets, the Lord Ieſus, the holy Martyrs, not one of them in their generation, died as the ſervants of the Lord, but as blaſphemers and dangerous hereticks, according to the account of the reverend Clergy then living, whoſe zeal (for God and the preſervation of the peace and purity of holy mother Church, to preſerve the glory of the one, and the honour of the other, was the principle cauſe that led them forth to deal ſo cruelly with them. Now ſeeing that unmatchable Phariſee *Saul* (which profeſſion in the church of God in that generation was accounted moſt pious) that could ſay as concerning the law he was unblameable in his converſation) being mad in his zeale for God, againſt the dear Saints of God. Conſider in how deſperate a condition he was in, when going to *Damaſcus*, if mercy had not met him: and ſeeing the Lord Ieſus conſtitute in his church, never a Conſtable nor Iuſtice of peace to meddle with any of his Saints, why are you ſo importunate to call in the Magiſtrate for your aſſiſtance, ſeeing you doe not produce your

your warrant or preſident from him, & ſeeing I find but one civill officer in his family, namely a Treaſurer: and for his ſake, be ſo courteous as not in the leaſt to engage the civill Magiſtrate with his corrective power to enforce any man to be a beleever, before that holy ſpirit convince him, ſo ſhall the church more probably bee freed from hypocriſie and backſliding, and you ſhall not through miſtakes attract any guilt upon them or your ſelves; and the rather becauſe you ingeniouſly confeſſe that you do but conceive this way you preſcribe to bee the right way.

See how our grandmother *Eve* was deceived in her conception when ſhee brought forth *Cain*, it could be no leſſe then the *Meſiah*, as ſhe thought; and lo a Murtherer: and *Abraham* a Prophet of the Lord, and the father of the faithfull, thought he had gotten the heire of promiſe when he had *Iſhmael*, and hee had nothing but a perſecuting ſcoffer, therefore take heed of zeal not rightly enformed: and ſurely thoſe ſeverall forty ſtripes ſave one, which *Paul* ſo frequently met with, will fall very ſmart upon his

his back, that will at any time take the boldneſſe (upon his fallible judgement) to lend them unto any Saint; and ſurely it will not repent any Saint of God that he did not enterpriſe to grieve the leaſt little one, that beleeveth. And therefore ſweetly *David*, 1 *Sam.* 25. 33, 34. By which counſel he was diverted from executing the determination of his counſell of War; conſider ſeriouſly who they were that perſecuted Ieſus Chriſt, the Prophets, and the Martyrs, were the men that did openly profeſſe themſelves enemies to godlineſſe, nothing leſſe; ſuppoſe in the dayes of Chriſt Ieſus the people would have had Religion reformed, who ſhould have been choſen for the Aſſembly? doubtleſſe it muſt have been Scribes and Phariſees, and no Publicans; ſurely *Gamaliel* was likely to have been Prolocutor, and his diſciple *Saul* might have been the publique notary; and yet ſee how theſe learned ſoules in their zeal for God were miſtaken; leave all the reſt, and to our preſent time, how many of our reverend Divines in the time of their Prelaticall obedience, how earneſtly did

did they contend for the upholding of the Leturgie, againſt ſuch as oppoſed it: which now they caſt out with tonges and ſlice. And had Biſhop *Laud* not ſteadfaſtly beleeved God was highly concerned in thoſe materiall churches, and that mens cringing and crouching were of high concernment before God, he would never have run the hazard of his head as he did. It is good to be zealouſly affected alwayes in a good thing. *Gal.* 4. 18. *And having no other ground but our fallible conceptions to guide our ſelves and others by, let us be very tender of enforcing.*

Now Chriſt alone having the government upon his ſhoulders who is only wiſe and infallible, and ſeeing the temple is filled with ſmoake and that he wil bring his people into the wildernes and plead with them, and that tongues ſhall ceaſe, and ye ſhall no more ſay one to another know the Lord, but ye ſhall be all taught of me, from the greateſt to the leaſt, why ſhall we limit the holy one of Iſrael, and ſay the time is not yet? And ſeeing he hath a fanne in his hand, he wil throughly purge his floor.

And

And bee not like thoſe officious huſbandmen, who no ſooner thought they ſaw a blade like a tare, but they muſt be picking of it up; the anſwer was, let both grow together untill harveſt, and unto *Iames & Iohn*, ye wot not of what ſpirit ye are of, I come not to deſtroy but to ſave. It may ſeem here is begging for a tolleration; for my ſelf I paſſe not what men conclude on in the matters of God, if they break his bonds, caſt away his cords, and will not have Chriſt to raign over them, they are but laught at, and will fall to pieces, knowing and being wel aſſured that there is a reſt for the people of God, a nd they that enter into it ceaſe from their workes as God did from his, and that the kingdomes and the powers ſhall ſerve the Lord Chriſt in the Saints, and this ſufficeth me.

FINIS.